United Nations E/CN.18/2004/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 February 2004

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Fourth session
Geneva, 3-14 May 2004
Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Common items for each session: multi-stakeholder dialogue

Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The present note has been prepared to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests and to describe the approach taken by the secretariat of the Forum to enhance the effectiveness of the dialogue and the efforts that major groups have made to ensure the relevance and value of their input to the Forum process. This year's dialogue will be conducted in two parts, consisting of a plenary session and two parallel group sessions. Discussion papers prepared by the major groups are contained in addenda to the present note.

2. In pursuance of its resolution 1/1, the Forum holds a multi-stakeholder dialogue at each of its sessions. Agenda 21 identified broad-based public participation in decision-making as a fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development and defined nine major groups.[1] Accordingly, the Forum stresses the importance of involving major groups in the work of the Forum and the value of inputs from major groups associated with forest management at the national, regional and global levels. Practical experience with promoting the Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Conservation, Management and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Forest Principles) and implementing the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action provides stakeholders with a unique perspective on progress, emerging issues, and obstacles that remain to sustainable forest management.

* E/CN.18/2004/1.

[1] Agenda 21 identified the following nine major groups of stakeholders: (1) women; (2) children and youth; (3) indigenous people; (4) non-governmental organizations; (5) local authorities; (6) workers and trade unions; (7) business and industry; (8) scientific and technological community; and (9) farmers.

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3. In order to facilitate consultation with the substantial number of stakeholders affected by and with interests in international forest policy, the secretariat of the Forum works with major group focal points[2] for the Forum to ensure effective outreach to stakeholder networks. Focal points are identified through consultations within each major group. They are charged with keeping major group organizations informed of progress in the preparations for Forum sessions. They are also responsible for overseeing the preparation of their respective discussion papers addressing the agenda items before the Forum, and ensuring that all interested major group organizations have the opportunity to contribute.

4. At its fourth session, the Forum will dedicate two meetings to the dialogue. The secretariat of the Forum has held regular consultations with the focal points of the major groups to plan the dialogue as well as formulate its objectives and format. Based on such consultations, the dialogue at the fourth session will be held in two parts: the first part will be held in plenary to provide an opportunity for discussion of the specific concerns of major groups between member States and other participants; the second part will be conducted in a working group format, with two parallel groups, facilitated by panel discussions. The groups will focus on two cross-cutting topics relevant to the themes of the fourth session. It is anticipated that this new format will make this year's multi-stakeholder dialogue more conducive to an interactive, interesting and engaging dialogue between the representatives of the major groups, Governments and other organizations. Facilitated panel discussions will cover such issues as "capacity-building" and "partnerships" as they relate to the themes of the fourth session.

5. The discussion papers from the major groups that are contained in addenda to the present note will address, inter alia, progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to the thematic elements[3] under discussion at the fourth session of the Forum, in particular as they relate to initiatives taken by organizations within their stakeholder group. The papers also highlight major groups' experience with the impact of the IPF/IFF proposals for action on their particular areas of concern, and include suggestions on how to move forward.

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[2] Business and industry: International Council of Forest Product Associations, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Inter-African Forest Industries; forest landowners: Confédération européenne des propriétaires forestiers or Confederation of European Forest Owners; indigenous peoples: Asociación Kunas Unidos por Nabguana; forest-related NGOs: Friends of Siberian Forests; scientific and technological communities: International Council for Science; workers and trade unions: International Federation of Building and Wood Workers; women: Uganda Women Tree Planting Movement and Green Earth Organization; youth and children: Initiatives-Jeunes, Global Youth Network and International Forest Students Association. Full contact information for the focal points can be found at http://www.un.org/esa/forests/contacts-major_groups.html.

[3] The thematic elements for the fourth session of the Forum are (1) traditional-forest-related knowledge; (2) forest-related scientific knowledge; (3) social and cultural aspects; (4) monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions; and (5) criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management.